

## Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC)

The expanded core curriculum (ECC) is a set of educational skills designed for students who are Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI) who miss out on everyday learning opportunities due to visual impairment. ECC checklists identify areas of strengths and needs. Needs can be addressed through intentional exposure and experiential learning opportunities and can be prioritized as goals within the individualized education program (IEP). Mastery of ECC skills enables students to use alternative strategies, access their educational core curriculum, cultivate social interactions with their peers, acquire concepts about the world around them, and develop independence skills. It is important to teach and practice ECC skills at home and school.

### Compensatory Skills

Compensatory abilities include reading and writing skills, strategies, and tools students can use to access the core curriculum, including braille, large print, tactile graphics, audio, objects, images, or symbols. Speaking and listening, study and organization skills, concept development, and spatial understanding also fall under the compensatory skill category.

### Assistive Technology

Assistive technology is a set of tools and devices that enhance communication and allow students who are BVI to access the curriculum independently. High-tech digital devices may include switches, eye gaze devices, alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices, notetakers, tablets, magnification and screen reading software, and keyboarding apps. Low-tech devices could include adapted books, real objects, magnifiers, a manual braille writer, and active learning supplies.

### Orientation and Mobility

Students who are BVI may need instruction on orientation and mobility (O&M) skills to help them make sense of the world around them and move safely and independently at home, school, and in their community. O&M lessons develop skills that include body awareness, requesting assistance, spatial relationships, human guide and white cane techniques, recognizing cues and landmarks, public transportation, and safe travel within the community.

### Social Interaction Skills

Social interaction skills are essential for interpersonal communication, developing friendships, and maintaining positive social interactions. Expressive and receptive communication skills support various social interactions, including using language to greet others, make a request, express a need, and decline assistance. Relationship-building skills include taking turns, sharing, and cooperating. Understanding appropriate social behavior includes things like reading body language, turning toward the person who is speaking to you, hand gestures, shaking hands, high fives, facial expressions, and personal space.

## **Independent Living Skills**

Independent living skills (ILS) are the abilities students need to manage their day-to-day tasks, such as eating skills, meal preparation, clothing care, household organization, personal grooming, and time and money management. Many of these skills occur naturally at home. It is critical to develop ongoing communication with school staff to ensure systematic instruction, frequent practice, and consistency in routines.

## **Career Education**

Planning for a successful transition from school to employment is important for students who are BVI. Many work-related skills, such as assuming responsibility at home and school, being on time, and staying on task, can be taught from a young age. Career education includes learning about jobs and work roles, identifying personal interests, strengths, weaknesses, and personality traits, and creating a plan for transition into adult life.

## **Self-Determination**

Self-determination involves knowing your strengths and weaknesses, what you believe in, and what values are important to you. It involves making decisions, working toward personal goals, advocating for access, and taking responsibility for your life.

## **Sensory Efficiency**

Students who are BVI often use a combination of functional vision, touch, hearing, smell, and taste to make connections within their environments and access the academic curriculum. They may use strategies that combine vision, touch, hearing, and smell to identify people, recognize an environment, locate their belongings, and follow instructions. Learning to efficiently use their senses requires instruction, especially on using optical devices, hearing aids, or AAC devices.

## **Recreation and Leisure**

Experiences in recreation and leisure can help students who are BVI to discover extracurricular activities they can enjoy throughout their lives. Intentionally exposing students to various physical, social, and leisure activities will help them make informed decisions about how to use their free time. Identifying barriers to access, providing appropriate adaptations for participation, and ensuring safety are important aspects of this ECC category.

## **Resources:**

- [Michigan Department of Education - Low Incidence Outreach \(MDE-LIO\)](http://mdelio.org) (mdelio.org)
- [Perkins School for the Blind: Expanded Core Curriculum \[PDF\]](http://bit.ly/3VcsfNs) (bit.ly/3VcsfNs)
- [Texas School for the Blind: What is the Expanded Core Curriculum? \[PDF\]](http://tsbvi.edu/programs/ecc) (tsbvi.edu/programs/ecc)
- [American Printing House for the Blind Family Connect: The Expanded Core Curriculum](http://test.familyconnect.org/education/expanded-core-curriculum) (test.familyconnect.org/education/expanded-core-curriculum)